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STATE FOR NEA/ELA AND EEB/IFD/ODF
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SUBJECT: LEBANON: GOL EXPECTS 50% INCREASE IN TOURISM IN 2009
(ECONOMIC WEEK IN REVIEW, JUNE 15 - 21, 2009)

CONTENTS

-- LEBANON EXPECTS TWO MILLION VISITORS IN 2009
-- SUCCESSFUL IPR ENFORCEMENT WORKSHOP HELD IN BEIRUT
-- PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP CONTINUES TO HELP FIGHT COUNTERFEITS
-- PRIME MINISTER SEEKS PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY
-- BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION EXHIBITION SHOWS HIGH INTEREST IN REAL
ESTATE SECTOR
-- NUMBER OF SWINE FLU CASES IN LEBANON REACHES TWENTY

LEBANON EXPECTS TWO
MILLION VISITORS IN 2009

[¶1.](#) (U) In an interview with French daily L'Orient le Jour on June 16, director general of the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) Nada Sardouk said she expects Lebanon to receive around two million total tourists in 2009, noting that 500,000 visited in the first four months of the year. The number of tourists visiting Lebanon in 2008 reached a record 1.33 million, a 31% percent increase compared to [¶2007.](#)

[¶2.](#) (U) Sardouk stressed that work for promoting tourism and development of the sector is being done in close collaboration with the private sector. The MOT is promoting Lebanon as a destination for medical tourism, ecotourism, and alternative lodging in rural areas, which also supports sustainable development. The MOT is also collaborating with the Lebanese American University (LAU) on the "Food is Identity" project, a research project that will help Lebanon register its national dishes at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

SUCCESSFUL IPR ENFORCEMENT
WORKSHOP HELD IN BEIRUT

[¶3.](#) (U) A three-day "Border Enforcement and Intellectual Property Rights" workshop was held June 16-19 at the Institute of Finance in Beirut. Over 30 participants from Lebanese Customs, Internal Security Forces (police), Common Border Forces, and General Security took part in the program, funded by the DOS's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), with speakers from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as well as local experts from the private

and public sectors. Attorney Todd Reves from USPTO noted that high-level GOL representation, including the ministers of interior, finance, energy and water, as well as Ambassador Sison, was unprecedented for such a workshop.

¶4. (U) During the opening ceremony, the ministers stressed on the important role that creativity and thus intellectual property rights (IPR) play in the Lebanese economy and the need to educate people, at the earliest stage possible, on respecting IP. The issue of finding a balance between IPR holders and providing goods at a price relative to per capita income in developing countries was also raised by the ministers, and the need for greater international cooperation to enforce IP. Minister of Interior Ziad Baroud said Lebanon needs to define its borders before protecting them, and stressed the importance of IPR for investment and WTO accession. Baroud noted that a government strategy is needed to properly enforce IPR. He also said that within the framework of the Arab Interior Ministers' Council, work was being done to establish an office to counter organized crime in Beirut, which would also cover IP crimes.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP CONTINUES
TO HELP FIGHT COUNTERFEITS

¶5. (SBU) The importance and success of public-private partnership in enforcing IPR was also highlighted during the general assembly of the Brand Protection Group (BPG) -- a group of 22 local and international companies fighting counterfeits -- held on June 18. Presentations highlighted the achievements of BPG's lobbying with the Ministry of Economy and Trade (MOET), Customs, and Beirut Port to step up efforts against counterfeits. The BPG will continue its

BEIRUT 00000685 002 OF 002

advertising campaign to raise awareness on counterfeits for the rest of 2009. A representative from the MOET's consumer protection department announced that of the 82 new inspectors that will be recruited this year, 10-20 will be specialized in IP and counterfeit issues, while they continue to operate a call center for consumer complaints (established in 2005 with BPG's help). Although BPG members recognized the progress made so far by the GOL in terms of protecting IPR, they noted the need to focus on the judiciary system and training of judges to better enforce IPR.

¶6. (SBU) Meanwhile, the Institute of Finance announced that it will be hosting a follow-up training program for enforcement bodies in mid-July, in which it expects around 350 participants from customs, police, and other public sector agencies. The training will be held by representatives of private companies, members of BPG, on better ways to enforce IPR.

PRIME MINISTER SEEKS PRIVATE SECTOR
SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

¶7. (SBU) On June 17, Prime Minister Siniora held a roundtable with heads of economic associations to exchange ideas and seek support for the regional development strategy and measures to counter the effects of the global economic crisis, which cabinet passed on June 12. Ramzi Hafez, editor in chief of Lebanon Opportunities magazine and close to the March 14 coalition, to which Siniora belongs, told us the purpose of the meeting was to get private and public sector support for the implementation of the development strategy. However, Hafez noted that Siniora held this meeting after the strategy was passed by cabinet, presumably so that he would not feel compelled to take any remarks into account. "This is Siniora's style," Hafez said.

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION EXHIBITION SHOWS
HIGH INTEREST IN REAL ESTATE SECTOR

¶8. (U) Project Lebanon, the 14th International Trade Exhibition for Construction Technology, Building Materials, and Equipment for the Middle East was held in Beirut on June 16-19. The exhibition featured the products and services of over 350 companies from 23

countries, including Lebanon, France, Germany, Italy, Iran, and Poland. The real estate sector in Lebanon has been one of the sectors receiving the highest rates of investment in recent years, and the vast turnout and number of exhibitors in Project Lebanon could be an indicator of the continued interest in the real estate sector in Lebanon and the region, in spite of the global economic crisis.

NUMBER OF SWINE FLU CASES IN
LEBANON REACHES TWENTY

19. (U) According to the Ministry of Public Health, new cases of swine flu have been confirmed in Lebanon, patients arriving from Australia, Canada, and five from the U.S. following their participation in a Youth and Exchange Study (YES) Program. Treatment has already been administered to all diagnosed and to those they had contact with in Lebanon. This brings the total of swine flu cases to twenty, all of which have originated from abroad and have either recovered or are in the process of recovery.

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